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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9738
RHMFISS/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000937

SIPDIS

FOR AFRICOM COMMANDER GENERAL WARD
AFRICOM AND CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/20/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [DJ](#) [SO](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN DJIBOUTI

REF: DJIBOUTI 764

Classified By: ERIC WONG, DCM. REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Post warmly welcomes the visit of General Ward. Since your last visit in September 2008, Djibouti continues efforts in international fora to condemn Eritrea for its June 2008 border incursion. At the same time, Djibouti continues to play a significant role hosting and supporting UN-led peace talks on Somalia, despite recent terrorist attacks in neighboring Somaliland. A key partner of the United States (reftel), Djibouti warmly welcomed the establishment of AFRICOM, and looks forward to inaugurating a USG-funded naval pier in early 2009. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Djiboutian senior principals' focus on two of its primary security concerns remains unchanged: externally, Eritrea's ongoing occupation of contested territory at Ras Doumeira, following the outbreak of hostilities in June 2008; and internally, food insecurity affecting more than one-third of Djibouti's population, largely resulting from drought and reliance on nomadic agriculture. However, the October 29 terrorist bombings in both Hargeisa and Bossaso (in Somaliland and Puntland, respectively) also highlighted the threat that instability in neighboring Somalia poses to Djibouti. Targets attacked in Hargeisa, Somaliland, included the presidential palace, United Nations offices, and Ethiopia's diplomatic mission. As a predominantly ethnic Somali society with strong cultural and political ties to Somalia, Djibouti was shaken by these attacks in areas that had been relatively stable, and has raised its internal security posture.

CONTINUED TENSIONS WITH ERITREA

¶3. (C) President Ismail Omar Guelleh addressed the UN Security Council on October 23 regarding continued tensions with Eritrea. He underscored that inaction by the international community would leave Djibouti only "the option of war." Djiboutian officials continue to seek a diplomatic solution to the crisis, however. Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf traveled recently to Tehran, in an attempt to determine whether Iranian influence could be brought to bear on Asmara. Djibouti seeks the imposition by the international community of sanctions against Eritrea, and is currently working with UN agencies to resettle more than 70 defector/deserters from Eritrea who have sought refuge in Djibouti.

ENGAGED AS HOST OF SOMALI PEACE TALKS

¶4. (C) Djibouti continues to play a significant role as host and supporter of UN-led Somali peace talks between Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) moderates led by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. The latest round of talks in the "Djibouti Process" are scheduled to begin o/a November 23, with Somali representatives expected to discuss modalities for the formation of a government of national unity, in the wake of Ethiopia's commitment to withdraw troops from key areas in Mogadishu, and an agreement on a cease-fire.

STRATEGIC PARTNER OF THE U.S.

¶5. (U) President Guelleh visited the United States in October 2008, after participating in the Francophone summit in Canada. As the host of Camp Lemonier, the only U.S. military base in sub-Saharan Africa, Djibouti warmly welcomed the establishment of AFRICOM, and has offered to host additional facilities. With USG funding, construction was recently completed at the new naval pier at Obock, one of the largest FMF projects in Africa. The inauguration of the Obock pier, expected in January 2009, will coincide with the opening of a new \$300 million commercial port facility at Doraleh and will underscore USG efforts to enhance Djibouti's maritime security. In November 2008, Djibouti also agreed to a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Safety Administration, to install a \$6 million "Megaports" sensor system at Doraleh port to detect nuclear materials being transshipped.

SWAN